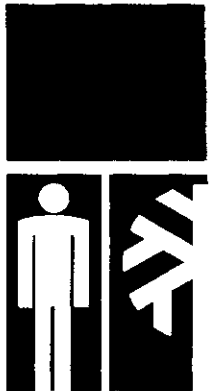
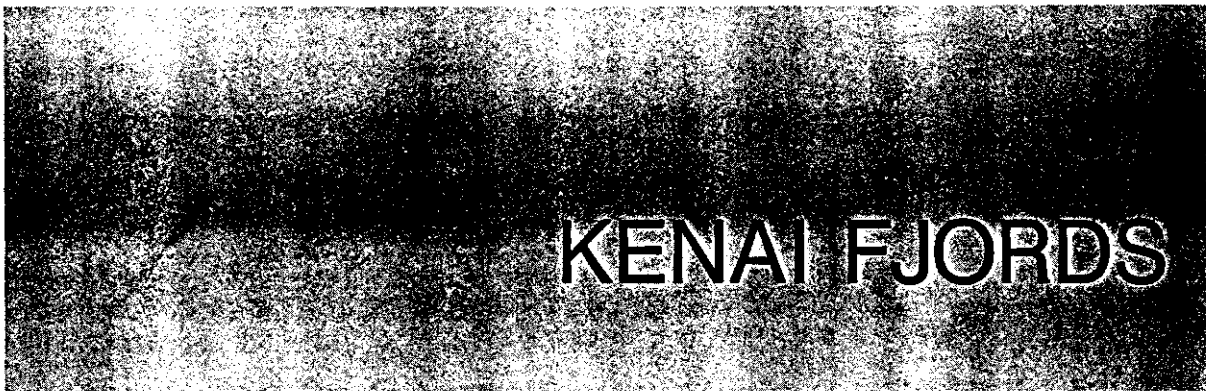


final environmental impact statement
wilderness recommendation



NATIONAL PARK / ALASKA

ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

This section describes the proposed action and three alternatives for possible wilderness designation at Kenai Fjords National Park. It also includes a map of lands considered for designation under each alternative, a scenario of possible developments and uses under each alternative, and a table summarizing these scenarios. The possible development and use scenarios are based on wilderness areas being considered under the alternatives, proposals in the general management plan, activities and developments identified by the public during the scoping process (see the "Consultation and Coordination" section for scoping information), potential activities or developments identified in ANILCA, and projections by the Park Service based on current trends in visitor use. The scenarios are not National Park Service proposals; rather they are our best professional judgments of the developments and uses that might occur in response to public interests and management needs in the next 30-40 years based on trends projected under each alternative to meet the objectives of that alternative. The scenarios have been developed for the purpose of analyzing possible environmental impacts in the FEIS to meet the intent of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

A summary comparison of environmental impacts is presented at the end of the section.

WILDERNESS SUITABILITY

No lands were designated as wilderness in Kenai Fjords National Park under the enabling legislation (ANILCA, sec. 701). The 1984 General Management Plan for the park included a wilderness suitability study, which determined that nearly 97 percent of the park's lands were suitable for wilderness designation. The subsequent application of wilderness criteria for other Alaskan parks resulted in an additional 3 percent of the lands being found suitable for wilderness. These lands meet the criteria for designation as defined in the 1964 Wilderness Act and the National Park Service policies for wilderness areas.

A 1,280-acre area near the terminus of Exit Glacier has been found unsuitable for wilderness designation because of existing and proposed NPS developments there. This area will be managed by the Park Service to support the developments and uses proposed in the 1982 Development Concept Plan for the area, including automobile access, camping, hiking, and interpretation. In addition, two 25-acre state-owned sites on Nuka Island and a 5-acre privately owned tract in Aialik Bay have been determined unsuitable because of the potential for development. The remainder of the state-owned lands on Nuka Island and the adjacent mainland area at the southern end of the park, although not currently eligible for wilderness designation because they are not federally owned, are suitable for designation because they are undisturbed and possess important wilderness values. Approximately 19,420 acres of these lands have been included within the study area, and analyses in this FEIS have

taken them into consideration. State-owned lands are currently managed according to state policies and the 1986 management plan for Nuka Island (Alaska DNR 1986), which is based on a multiple use concept where recreation and wildlife habitat are the primary resource values.

Approximately 119,900 acres of federally owned lands within the park boundary have been selected by native corporations under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971, and of these lands about 77,090 acres are expected to be conveyed to the corporations. Selected lands will remain in federal ownership until they are interimly conveyed, and they are suitable for wilderness designation because they are undeveloped and possess important wilderness values. Under the three action alternatives (2, 3, and 4) these lands have been included in the wilderness areas under consideration; however, when they are interimly conveyed, they will no longer be eligible for wilderness designation unless later acquired by the federal government. Management, use, and development of conveyed lands will be determined by corporation members; corporation proposals are unknown at the present time. A native allotment has been applied for on federal lands in Aialik Bay; this 120-acre tract has been included in possible wilderness pending action on the application. There are eight unpatented mining claims in three claim groups on the north and west arms of Nuka Bay; these claims are potentially suitable for wilderness designation, and they have been included in possible wilderness pending completion of validity determinations. Any of the above lands that are not conveyed or transferred to private ownership will remain in federal ownership and will be managed by the National Park Service so as not to impair their wilderness characteristics and values.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

The wilderness study area encompasses all of the lands determined suitable for wilderness designation in the General Management Plan and subsequent evaluations. A total of 668,165 of the park's 669,500 acres have been determined to be suitable (see the Study Area map). The study area includes a portion of the coastal mountain system on the southeastern side of the Kenai Peninsula, much of which is covered by the immense Harding Icefield. About three-quarters of the 300-square-mile icefield is within the park and study area, and 10 major glaciers flow out of it through the park. To the southeast they descend to a fjord system where mountain ridges extend out into the Gulf of Alaska. Glaciers carve the valleys between these jagged ridges, and ocean waters replace the glaciers in the fjords. Mature Sitka spruce and hemlock cover the ends of the fjord peninsulas, and a pure stand of mature hemlock is found on the southern edge of Nuka Island. Bald eagles nest in the trees along the shoreline, and more than 800 mountain goats inhabit the rocky slopes above treeline. Black bears are found along salmon streams in forested areas and along the coastline. Sea otters live in the shallow, protected bays and lagoons. Harbor seals, up to 2,500 along the coast, spend their summers amongst the icebergs calved from tidewater glaciers in the fjords. Seabirds seasonally nest on

the steep cliffs and nearby offshore islands. Twelve colonies of up to 1,000 birds each and 11 more colonies of up to 100 birds each inhabit the study area. Whales, porpoises, dolphins, sea lions, and fur seals are common in the fjords.

The vast majority of the park is untouched by man. In only a few secluded places are Park Service facilities, private lands, and mining claims to be found. The combination of the massive icefield and glaciers, rugged mountains, free-flowing rivers, coastal lagoons, and a shoreline with countless coves and inlets creates an area of exceptional scenic and wilderness quality. Opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation are available almost everywhere in the study area.

Lands within the study area are currently managed by the Park Service in ways that have not impaired their wilderness characteristics and values. Any lands that were designated as wilderness under the proposed action or alternatives would be maintained in their current condition because no development proposals beyond those authorized in ANILCA and the Wilderness Act could be considered without congressional action to reverse wilderness designation.

ALTERNATIVES AND RELATED DEVELOPMENT AND USE SCENARIOS

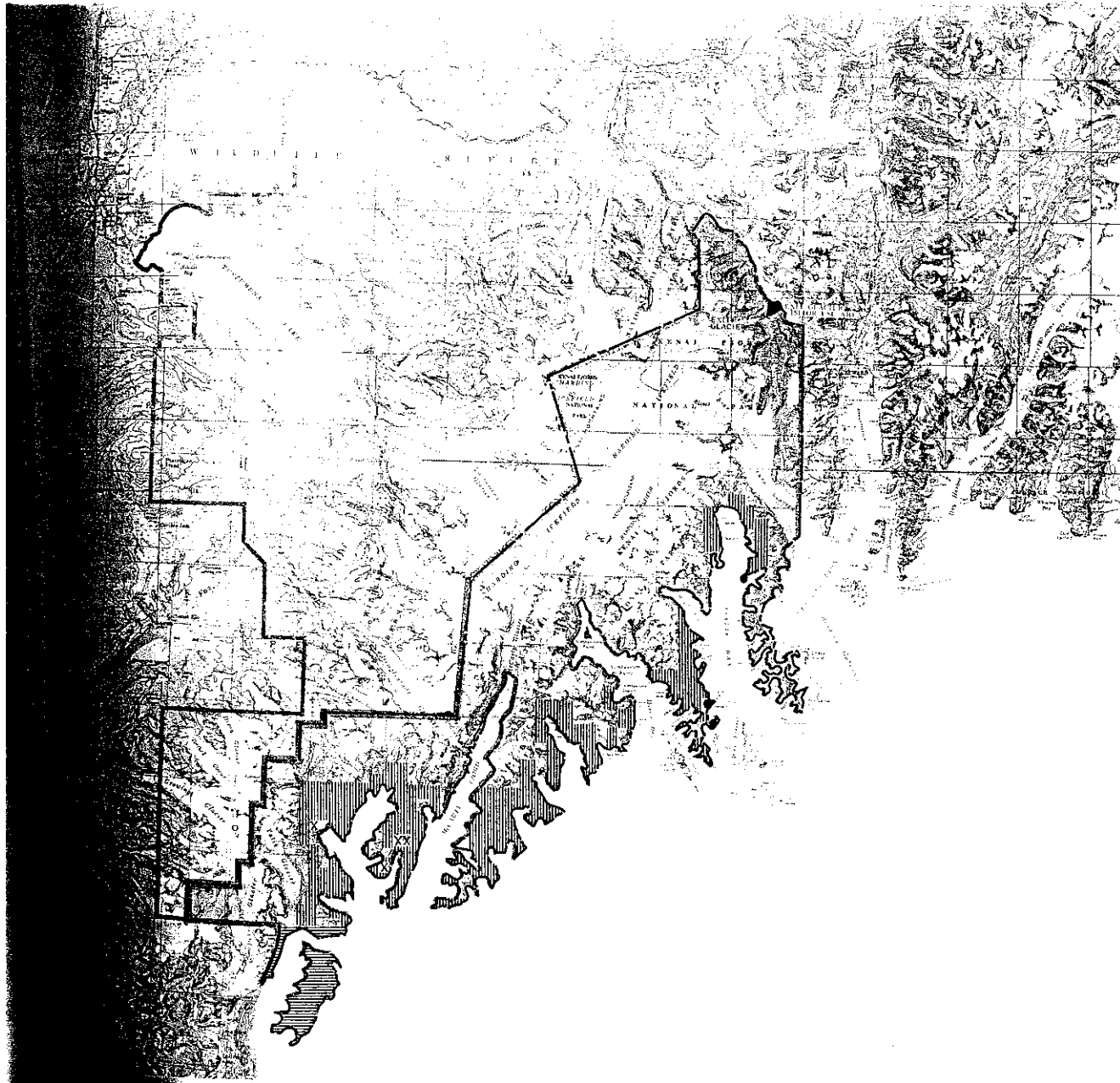
The proposed action and alternatives that have been examined for possible wilderness designation are as follows:








Alternative 1: No Action - None of the 668,165 acres within the study area considered for wilderness designation

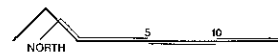
Alternative 2: Proposed Action - Approximately 587,345 acres, or 88 percent of the study area, recommended for wilderness designation and 19,420 acres, or 3 percent of the study area, recommended as a potential wilderness addition; a 61,400-acre area in the northeastern part of the park and extending onto the Harding Icefield excluded from the recommendation

Alternative 3: Majority Wilderness - Approximately 633,025 acres, or 95 percent of the study area, considered for wilderness designation and 19,420 acres, or 3 percent of the study area, recommended as a potential wilderness addition; a smaller portion of the Harding Icefield and a corridor below it (total 15,720 acres) excluded from consideration, with an access zone to permit future feasibility studies for tramway development


Alternative 4: Maximum Wilderness - Approximately 648,745 acres, or nearly 97 percent of the study area, considered for wilderness designation and 19,420 acres, or 3 percent of the study area, recommended as a potential wilderness addition



-  Study Area/Suitable for Wilderness
-  Not Suitable for Wilderness
-  Park Boundary
-  Land Selection, Native and State—includes subsurface and surface estates
-  Native and State-Owned Lands—includes subsurface and surface estates
-  Small Tract Entries—includes native allotments, homesites, T&Ms, etc.
-  Mining Claims



STUDY AREA

 KENAI FJORDS NATIONAL PARK
U.S. Department of the Interior / National Park